

My name is Nicole Bacile. I live in Enfield, Connecticut. **I fully support HB 5372 An Act Concerning Dyslexia Instruction offered in Teacher Preparation Programs.**

I started my son in a town sponsored Preschool Program. My son was screened and placed at age 4 for a mentor in this program. He had a positive attitude, played well with others and was able to be compassionate with his peers. His teacher had her Master's in Special Education. There would be a 50 / 50 ratio of special needs students and mentors. Luca did well in that program and was loved by all. However, hindsight shows that the teacher who was trained in Special Education, should have been able to pick up the signs clearly that there was a reading challenge in front of her. The red flags were that he did not participate in any stations from September to November in the journal writing station. At open house, I asked why his journal was blank? His answer was that he skipped that station everyday. Writing made his hand hurt. He also could not memorize his alphabet or numbers or his birth date. At the end of the year his journal pages were a swirl of color not one picture. He was graded on his art work as not meeting grade level. He could not draw a self portrait, letters or numbers expected at grade level. He could facilitate a meeting at snack and give everyone a job in his construction company. He was pushed to Kindergarten. I choose not to send him at five but six. Thinking another year of play and learning the alphabet, numbers and his name would help.

My son Luca first showed signs of having major stress by December in Kindergarten. His desk was moved away from a student who helped him with his letters and class work. Without her help he was not able to do simple tasks of writing letters of the alphabet. He refused to go to school and cried. He cried because he said his hand hurt when writing. He learned early to compensate by memorizing. This would only last for short periods of time. He would memorize his sight words for prizes but when on paper did not recognize them. He also learned that by helping the teacher with classroom duties would distract her from his problems.

In first grade he had a substitute for most of the year because of maternity leave. This created an anxious and migraine prone first grader. Again, he said that he was just looking at the words and pictures during silent reading time which progressed from 10 to 50 minutes by year end. When I discussed this with the teacher I was told this was part of the reading process. Until November, during the teacher conference I was told he was reading at a kindergarten level. The solution was that there would be a grant later in the year that would allow tutors to come into the class room with slow readers. Upon my assistance for extra help, he was put in a late afternoon time slot from 2 to 3 pm working with a Remedial Reading Specialist who had to give up her teacher prep time to help. This was not working because he was tired at the end of the day, the instruction was not appropriate for his challenges. She silently encouraged me to get him tested. Another member of the faculty gave me a book to read over the summer. She secretly told me not to disclose where I got it. It was called *Overcoming Dyslexia*.

In second grade he would come home from school and hit himself. He cried and missed over 17 days of school in one term from pretend illness. When we finally broke the shell by going to a therapist by-weekly, Luca said his music teacher was testing the class by making him read and sing in front of the class from the board. Luca couldn't understand the words on the board. His teacher told me it was not her responsibility to let other teachers know of my son's reading challenges. Another time, while expressing my son's struggles, she said to me that I should let her teach at school and I should mother at home. She also, raised her voice and slammed her fist onto a desk to express to my husband and I, during a conference, that my son was a reader. This behavior was acceptable because she was in the presence of the principal when she did that. She did not encourage him to use any of his accommodations (break pass, stress ball). She even said that he was doing so well that he was going to read a book to the kindergarten class. I refused to let her humiliate my son. Finally, during the summer break we gathered his teacher's list of summer reading recommendations (she gave me personally during a PPT) for my son, he broke down and cried ... begged me not to send him back.... her list was a Dr. Seuss marathon of rhyming books at a kindergarten level. Dyslexics don't read rhymes.

I spent the first six months of second grade waiting for an appointment to become available after the approval of an Independent Evaluation. The results were given in May/June. There were 32 recommendations for classroom accommodations in all areas of learning and writing. Not one was transferred to the 3rd grade IEP during the meeting. It was a three hour marathon meeting arguing over what label to put on the IEP. The Neurologist was present at this meeting (I paid for her attendance by the hour) it was a very hostile environment. The meeting had to be rescheduled to discuss the accommodations. The Neurologist was not present.

Every step of the way, I was told by his IEP team that he did not have Dyslexia, ADHD, or anxiety. They were all clearly stated on the report from the Neurologist. The evaluation was paid for by the school but not seriously considered. I had gotten an advocate to attend meetings. From there I obtained an attorney, then was banned from my child's school. My son was one of three students, all the same age, same grade, different schools in Enfield that have Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and ADHD. I choose to homeschool Luca from third grade to present, the other parent choose a magnet school, and there is only one left in the Enfield district who has obtained an attorney to continue her fight for appropriate education.

There was not a teacher in that school or district trained to work with students with dyslexia. My son was placed in a Special Education room with children with severe behavioral issues. They would learn together how to read. They were grouped as a whole of those who could not read.

This Bill would allow teachers to receive training while still at College or University saving the districts money, teachers time, and students from falling behind. There needs to be a baseline in which all teachers at any level can see the signs of a student struggling with Dyslexia from the start. This Bill could ensure the minimum standards of knowledge and practice within our institutions of higher education on how teachers are prepared in structured literacy and how this will benefit both the teachers and the students.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Nicole Bacile